



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk (860)441-6640
Town Manager
(860)441-6630

Mayor Harry A. Watson, Councilors Peter J. Bartinik, Jr., Heather Sherman Bond, Catherine Kolnaski, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Rita M. Schmidt, John F. Scott, Paulann H. Sheets, and James L. Streeter.

Tuesday, March 6, 2007

7:30 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

I. ROLL CALL

Mayor Watson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger, Assistant to the Town Manager Lee Vincent, Town Clerk Barbara Tarbox, and Office Assistant Elga Concepcion.

Members Present: Mayor Watson, Councilor Bartinik, Jr., Councilor Bond, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Schmidt, Councilor Scott, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Streeter

Members Absent: Councilor Kolnaski

II. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Salute to the Flag was led by Mayor Watson.

III. RECOGNITION, AWARDS & MEMORIALS

2007-0040 Proclamation Honoring George Edwards, Jr.

Read

Mayor Watson read the Proclamation which he presented to Mr. Edwards at his celebration dinner on March 2 .

Recess for Public Hearing

2007-0055 Public Hearing on Mystic River Homes Tax Abatement Ordinance

PUBLIC HEARING ON AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR AN ENHANCED TAX ABATEMENT ON FORTY-SIX HOUSING UNITS OWNED BY MYSTIC RIVER HOMES, INC. AND USED SOLELY FOR RENTAL TO LOW OR MODERATE-INCOME PERSONS OR FAMILIES

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF GROTON:

That pursuant to Section 8-215 of the Connecticut General Statutes, the Town Manager is authorized to enter into an agreement with Mystic River Homes, Inc., a non-profit corporation organized and existing under the laws of the State of Connecticut with a principal place of business in the Town of Groton, County of New London, State of Connecticut, for a full abatement of taxes on the land and buildings located in the village of Noank, Town of Groton, Connecticut that comprise the forty-six units of housing used solely for rental to low or moderate-income persons or families which were constructed in or around 1978 (the "Housing Units"). The Housing Units to which this Ordinance applies have been given an abatement in the amount of 80% pursuant to Town of Groton Ordinance No. 107 and the "Tax Abatement Agreement" between the Town of Groton and Mystic River Homes, Inc. authorized by resolution of the Town Council on June 3, 1974. It is the purpose of this Ordinance to increase the abatement to be applied to said Housing Units from 80% to 100%. This Ordinance shall supersede the provisions of Ordinance No. 107 specifically applicable to said Housing Units. The remaining provisions of Ordinance No. 107 shall remain in full force and effect. The 80% abatement applicable to said Housing Units shall continue until the execution of the agreement authorized by this Ordinance. In no event shall the term of said agreement be longer than the term of the existing agreement. This Ordinance shall

become effective 44 days after publication of notice of passage.

Heard at Public Hearing

Arlene Stamm, 20 Smith Court, Noank, Treasurer of Mystic River Homes Incorporated, supports the Mystic River Homes Tax Abatement and communicated that these facilities service low income tenants. She stated that although they receive State and Federal aid, each dollar which is added to the cost of rent adds to the hardship of the tenants. Therefore, it would be appreciated if the Council would consider increasing the abatement to 100%.

IV. CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Theodore Frase, 598 New London Road, Mystic, Vice President of the Groton Animal Foundation (GAF), read a letter which he mailed to Councilors last week. He noted the foundation's postal address is Post Office Box 7023 Groton, Connecticut 06340 and that their website address is <http://www.grotonanimalfoundation.org>.

The organization's mission is to raise funds to construct an animal shelter and to create public awareness.

Ed Ettinger, 174 Cedar Road, Mystic, asked for the Town Attorney's opinion as to whether or not the Council and the RTM must approve the decommissioning of four school properties. He also requested clarity as to whether or not borrowed monies will be required to fund this decommissioning and if a referendum would be necessary before these schools are closed. Mr. Ettinger requested that the Mayor delegate a Councilor to respond to petitioners who are in favor of a phase-in of property taxes.

V. RESPONSES TO CITIZENS' PETITIONS, COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Responding to Councilor Bond's inquiry regarding Mr. Ettinger's remarks, the Town Manager verified that if the schools are closed, the Board of Education has to determine what to do with these properties and that the schools do not have to be decommissioned immediately. The Town Manager's office will research whether there are deed restrictions on the school properties, what the BOE intends to do with the closed schools, and the costs associated with maintaining these closed buildings so they do not deteriorate.

Responding to Mr. Ettinger, Councilor Sheets shared his concern with the BOE's decision to close two more schools.

VI. CONSENT CALENDAR

a. Approval of Minutes

2007-0054 Approval of Minutes (Town Council)

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council meeting of February 20, 2007 are hereby accepted and approved.

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

b. Deletions from the Town Council Referral List

2006-0255 Use of Fleet Maintenance Services by Ambulance Services

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2006-0295 Overview of Town Departments

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2007-0028 Pavement Management System Update

This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.

2007-0034 Cutler Middle School Boiler Replacement

- 2006-0236 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - No further action on the Consent Calendar.
Acceptance of Open Space at East Farm Subdivision
- 2007-0038 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant
- 2007-0026 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Appointment to Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority Board
- 2006-0302 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Town's Representation on Groton Ambulance Board of Directors
- 2007-0044 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Appointment of Rosemary Duval-Arnould to Library Board
- 2007-0045 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Appointment of Mariellen French to the Zoning Commission
- 2007-0046 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Appointment of Thomas Skrmetti to Harbor Management Commission
- 2007-0047 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Reappointment of John Webster to Permanent School Building Committee
- 2007-0048 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Reappointment of A. Neil Brown to the Shellfish Commission
- 2007-0049 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Reappointment of Catherine Talbot to Harbor Management Commission
- 2007-0050 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Reappointment of Rosemary Palmer to the Library Board
- 2007-0051 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Reappointment of Jennifer Lane to Library Board
- 2007-0052 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Reappointment of Joseph Kane to the Shellfish Commission
- 2007-0053 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Reappointment of Kenneth Steere to Harbor Management Commission
- 2007-0043 This Matter was Deleted from Referral List - Action to be taken on the Consent Calendar.
Public Hearing on FYE 2008 Proposed Budget

c. Special Trust Fund Contributions

2007-0036 Special Trust Fund Contributions

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SPECIAL TRUST FUNDS

RESOLVED, that the Town Council hereby accepts contributions to the Town as follows:

Raymond Bartolucci - \$25.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Charles Barnum PTO - \$931.44 - Social Services Discretionary
Patricia Collins, Charles Barnum PTO - \$25.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Randall Collins, Charles Barnum PTO - \$25.00 - Social Services Discretionary
William Colom, Charles Barnum PTO - \$5.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Christine Ganacoplos - \$20.00 - Social Services Discretionary

Sandra Grinzi, Charles Barnum PTO - \$25.00 - Social Services Discretionary
George Marshall - \$100.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Theresa Prior, Charles Barnum PTO - \$9.56 - Social Services Discretionary
Jean Simpson - \$30.00 - Social Services Discretionary
Various Donations - \$1,158.00 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
City of Groton - \$621.69 - Groton Utilities Energy Assistance Program
James and Penelope Sherrard - \$120.00 - Parks and Recreation Revolving
The Bittl Family in memory of Frank Cashman - \$300.00 - Library Discretionary
Richard and Nancy Seager - \$50.00 - Parks and Recreation Revolving
Marilyn and Chuck Stevens - \$500.00 - Parks and Recreation Revolving

This Matter was Adopted on the Consent Calendar.

Passed The Consent Calendar

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Streeter, to adopt the Consent Calendar, including all the preceding items marked as having been adopted on the Consent Calendar.
The motion carried unanimously

VII. COMMUNICATION REPORTS (Other than Committee Reports)

a. Town Councilors

Several Councilors received a letter from the Groton Animal Foundation (GAF) and emails regarding the boycotting of Wal-Mart as a result of the proposed developer's appeal of the Planning Commission's rejection of the project. A few of the Councilors attended the recognition dinner for George Edwards on March 2.

The Mayor received a call from a Relay for Life representative withdrawing the request to utilize Poquonnock Plains Park for this year's event. Mayor Watson attended the meeting of the Steering Committee to End Homelessness in Southeastern Connecticut on March 1. He read to a group of children at the Groton Public Library and the Branford House in celebration of Read Across America Day. He attended the meeting of the Economic and Development Advisory Group on March 6.

Councilor Schmidt received inquiries regarding the need for a bulky waste program and flooding of Route 1 and Poquonnock Plains Park from a recent rainstorm. She received calls concerning the Mystic River Homes tax abatement.

Councilor Scott stated that he met with State Senator Andrew Maynard on February 23 to discuss legislation related to the insurance industry, campaign finance law and property tax reform. He stated that he will be representing the Town at the National League of Cities Conference next week.

Councilor Bartinik stated that the drainage system in Poquonnock Plains Park was designed to gradually disperse water which may be perceived as flooding by the public.

The Town Manager concurred with Councilor Bartinik and noted the flooding of Route 117 during the last rainstorm. This week's Weekly Status Report will include a storm update.

Meeting Cancellation

The Town Council agreed by consensus to cancel the Committee of the Whole meeting on March 13.

b. Representative Town Meeting

The next RTM meeting will be on March 14.

c. Clerk of the Council

Town Clerk Tarbox received one page of a petition for consideration of a phase-in of property

taxes. She announced Barbara Dixon's resignation from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The Town Clerk read a list of vacancies on other Boards and Commissions in the Town, with an emphasis on the Charter Revision Commission. Interested citizens may contact the Town Clerk's office or access the Town's website to acquire an application. She will be attending the Freedom of Information Liaison Workshop on March 13.

d. Town Manager

Town Manager Mark Oefinger stated that there will be a special Committee of the Whole meeting on March 8 to consider non-union terms and conditions. The budget will be available for distribution no later than March 15. Mr. Oefinger noted that next week's Group I and Group II meetings are cancelled. He encouraged Councilors to attend a reception for transferring Pfizer employees on March 9 at the Mystic Hilton.

e. Town Attorney

No report.

VIII. COMMITTEE REPORTS

a. Community & Cultural Development - Chairman O'Beirne

No meeting; no report.

b. Economic Development - Chairman Bond

No meeting; no report.

c. Education/Health & Social Services - Chairman Kolnaski

No meeting; no report.

d. Environment & Recreation - Chairman Sheets

Councilor Sheets reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on February 27 which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

e. Finance - Chairman Schmidt

Councilor Schmidt reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on February 27.

f. Personnel/Appointments/Rules - Chairman Scott

Councilor Scott reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on February 27 which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

g. Public Safety - Chairman Streeter

Councilor Streeter read the minutes of the meeting held on February 27 which are on file in the Town Clerk's office.

h. Public Works - Chairman Bartinik

No meeting; no report.

i. Committee of the Whole - Mayor Watson

The Committee of the Whole met on February 27 and the items on tonight's agenda are a result of that meeting. There were Special Committee of the Whole meetings on March 1 and March 6.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilor Sheets stated that she shares Mr. Ettinger's concern that the Council failed to achieve a phase-in of property taxes over five years. She was not aware that there was a petition with hundreds of signatures in support of a phase-in.

X. NEW BUSINESS

2006-0236 Acceptance of Open Space at East Farm Subdivision

RESOLUTION ACCEPTING OPEN SPACE AT EAST FARM SUBDIVISION

WHEREAS, the East Farm Subdivision, adjacent to Noank Road, was approved January 11, 2005,

and

WHEREAS, the Groton Planning Commission, on August 8, 2006, recommended acceptance of a parcel of open space consisting of approximately 1.94 acres, and

WHEREAS, this open space consists in large part of attractive wetlands that are highly desirable for preservation, and

WHEREAS, the open space parcel will be marked with signs as part of the Town's Coastal Public Access lands, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Town of Groton accepts the parcel of open space designated on the officially approved plans of East Farm Subdivision, and that this matter be referred to the Representative Town Meeting.

A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Adopted and Referred to the Representative Town Meeting.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0038

Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) Grant

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A GRANT UNDER THE LIBRARY SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGY ACT (LSTA)

WHEREAS, the Groton Public Library maintains a Public Computer Learning Center offering free computer classes, and

WHEREAS, the PC Learning Center especially helps persons aged fifty and above to pursue lifelong learning, enhanced job skills and recreational and personal computer skills, and

WHEREAS, a grant program administered by the Connecticut State Library could provide funds to hire a part-time employee and upgrade existing computer equipment, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that Town Manager Mark R. Oefinger is authorized to apply for and receive an LSTA grant of \$24,860 through the Connecticut State Library.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Adopted as Amended.

MOTION TO AMEND

Upon the clarification of the Town Manager that the position will be part-time and not contractual, a motion to amend the Resolution by deleting "contractual" was moved by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Scott.

VOTE ON THE MOTION TO AMEND

The motion to amend carried unanimously.

VOTE ON THE RESOLUTION AS AMENDED:

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0026

Appointment to Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority Board

RESOLUTION APPOINTING JOHN CARRINGTON TO THE SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT REGIONAL RESOURCE RECOVERY AUTHORITY

RESOLVED, that John Carrington, Assistant Director of Public Works, 134 Groton Long Point Road is hereby appointed, replacing Frank O'Beirne, as alternate representative to the Southeastern Connecticut Regional Resource Recovery Authority for a term ending 4/16/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2006-0302

Town's Representation on Groton Ambulance Board of Directors

RESOLUTION APPROVING TOWN REPRESENTATIVES IN OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS

WHEREAS, the Town of Groton makes contributions to outside cultural and social service agencies and to contractual service organizations, and

WHEREAS, Section 8.10 of the Town Charter requires that each organization receiving Town funds have at least one board member who has been nominated by the Town Council, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council has continued to have discussions with Groton Ambulance on a number of issues of mutual interest including a potential expansion of the Groton Ambulance facility on Route 117, which is owned by the Town, and

WHEREAS, the Town Council is of the opinion that it would be appropriate during these discussions to have a Town Councilor serve as the Council's representative to the Groton Ambulance Association Board, now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that James L. Streeter, 64 Pleasant Street, is hereby appointed as representative to the Groton Ambulance Association, replacing George T. Law, to serve for the balance of Fiscal Year 2006-2007, and to serve thereafter until reappointed or replaced, such appointment to be effective immediately following the approval of this resolution.

A motion was made by Mayor Watson, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0044

Appointment of Rosemary Duval-Arnould to Library Board

RESOLUTION APPOINTING ROSEMARY E. DUVAL-ARNOULD TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

RESOLVED, that Rosemary E. Duval-Arnould, 90 Colony Road, is appointed to the Library Board for a term ending 12/31/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0045

Appointment of Mariellen French to the Zoning Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING MARIELLEN FRENCH AS A REGULAR MEMBER OF THE ZONING COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Mariellen French, 12 Little Gull Lane, Mystic, currently an alternate member, is appointed as a regular member of the Zoning Commission for a term ending 12/31/08.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0046

Appointment of Thomas Skrmetti to Harbor Management Commission

RESOLUTION APPOINTING THOMAS SKRMETTI AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER TO THE HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Thomas Skrmetti, 71 Lapstrake Court, Mystic is appointed as an alternate member to the Harbor Management Commission, for a term ending 09/01/07.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Schmidt, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

REAPPOINTMENTS

There was consensus to take one vote on the following seven reappointments.

2007-0047

Reappointment of John Webster to Permanent School Building Committee

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING JOHN WEBSTER TO THE PERMANENT SCHOOL BUILDING COMMITTEE

RESOLVED, that John Webster, 455 Noank Road, Mystic is hereby reappointed to the Permanent School Building Committee for a term expiring 9/29/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0048

Reappointment of A. Neil Brown to the Shellfish Commission

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING A. NEIL BROWN, JR. TO THE SHELLFISH COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that A. Neil Brown, Jr., 79 Edgecomb Street, Mystic is hereby reappointed to the Shellfish Commission for a term expiring 12/31/11.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0049

Reappointment of Catherine Talbot to Harbor Management Commission

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING CATHERINE TALBOT TO THE HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Catherine Talbot, 10 Florence Drive, Mystic, is reappointed as an alternate member to the Harbor Management Commission, for a term ending 09/01/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0050

Reappointment of Rosemary Palmer to the Library Board

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING ROSEMARY PALMER TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

RESOLVED, that Rosemary Palmer, 14 Birch Lane, is hereby reappointed to the Library Board for a term expiring 12/31/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0051

Reappointment of Jennifer Lane to Library Board

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING JENNIFER H. LANE TO THE LIBRARY BOARD

RESOLVED, that Jennifer H. Lane, 70 Pearl Street, Noank, is reappointed to the Library Board for a term ending 12/31/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0052

Reappointment of Joseph Kane to the Shellfish Commission

RESOLUTION REAPPOINTING JOSEPH KANE AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE SHELLFISH COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Joseph D. Kane, 131 Prospect Hill Road, Noank, is reappointed as an alternate member to the Shellfish Commission for a term ending 12/31/11.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0053

Reappointment of Kenneth Steere to Harbor Management Commission

COMMISSION

RESOLVED, that Kenneth Steere, 144 East Shore Avenue, Groton Long Point is hereby reappointed to the Harbor Management Commission for a term expiring 09/01/09.

A motion was made by Councilor Scott, seconded by Councilor Bond, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

2007-0043

Public Hearing on FYE 2008 Proposed Budget

RESOLUTION SETTING PUBLIC HEARING DATE ON FYE 2008 PROPOSED BUDGET

RESOLVED, that the Groton Town Council will hold a public hearing on the FYE 2008 Proposed Budget, pursuant to Section 8.4.1 of the Town Charter, on Monday, March 26, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at the Groton Senior Center, 102 Newtown Road (Route 117), Groton, Connecticut.

A motion was made by Councilor Bond, seconded by Councilor Scott, that this matter be Adopted.

The motion carried unanimously

XI. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

XII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Bartinik and so voted unanimously.

Attest:

Barbara Tarbox, Town Clerk

*Elga Concepcion
Office Assistant*